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# Congress of the United States

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## "A New Assessment of Iraq"

### Statement of Representative Christopher Shays

### April 25, 2006

The selection of a prime minister offers hope Iraq will continue on the path toward a representative government, diminished violence and economic growth.

But for the foreseeable future Iraq will require continued support. And because we overthrew the former Iraqi regime, the majority of that support must come from the American people.

As we look to the future it is essential we ask ourselves the right questions.

- We have been asking, "When do we pull our troops out of Iraq?" This is the wrong question.
- We should be asking, "What can we do to help the Iraqis succeed?"
- And we should be clear what we mean by success.

To help answer the question of how to succeed we require objective, on the ground, assessments. We cannot afford to be misled by rosy assessments painted by some, nor apocalyptic assessments by others.

In this regard, I call attention to a bipartisan group formed at the urging of Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia, myself and others—the Iraq Study Group. This group is charged with conducting a fresh eyes assessment of the current and prospective situation in Iraq and is co-chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker, and former Congressman Lee Hamilton. We look forward to the group's findings and recommendations.

Today we are here to receive testimony from David Walker, Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office. Mr. Walker and his audit teams have recently returned from Iraq. The GAO examinations identify mistakes, progress and, most importantly, future challenges we face.

His testimony can help us better understand how to empower Iraqis so they may have security, representative government and economic prosperity.

I recently returned from my twelfth trip to Iraq. While there we also visited three countries in the region, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Israel. Their leaders provided us with one overriding message—we must not fail in Iraq. And the United States should not withdraw from Iraq prematurely.

I am convinced premature withdrawal of our military will guarantee failure. I believe we must replace our withdrawal mindset with a mindset that appreciates what our military, state department and others have accomplished in Iraq, and the sacrifices made by the people of Iraq to grasp hold of democracy and live a better life.

I agree with Comptroller David Walker and his team when they say, "The war in Iraq will not be won by the military alone," that "Iraq's future requires strong Iraqi leadership, sustained US commitment, and a reengaged international community."

I think we get the first point; are wrestling with the second—sustained US commitment; and are not doing enough on the third to reengage the international community.

As always, we thank the GAO for its invaluable oversight and look forward to the Comptroller General's testimony this morning.